

Harold L. Griffin, M.D., P.A.

Ear, Nose & Throat — Head & Neck Surgery

Reconstructive Facial Surgery

Allergy — Hearing Aids

1221 Bowie Street

Columbus, Texas 78934

Telephone: (409) 732-5791

Toll Free: 1-800-445-5062

October 26, 2000

Honorable Donna Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Honorable Secretary Shalala:

The Food and Drug Administration may shortly propose changes to the way Hearing Aids are sold that could PUT ME OUT OF BUSINESS and IMPEDE ACCESS TO HEARING CARE for MILLIONS of our nation's seniors. We fit hearing aids out here in the country because many of our senior patients will not and cannot go to Houston.

I am a Board Certified, Texas state licensed Hearing Instrument Specialist. For almost 30 years I have provided hearing health care services to hundreds of our state's hearing-impaired. Presently, all three members of the hearing health care delivery team (Physicians, Hearing Aid Specialists, and Audiologists) are recognized as qualified entry points into the hearing health care delivery system. The rule the FDA is advocating would allow audiologists - without any justification- to install themselves as the sole entry point into hearing health care by allowing states to require tests that they would only allow audiologists to conduct prior to the purchase of hearing aids.

Due to the fact that there are NO audiologists in this entire area this would put the seniors in at least 8 counties - our county of Colorado and the surrounding counties that we serve - at a serious disadvantage. As I mentioned before, many of my elderly patients cannot drive into Houston or Austin or San Antonio. Some of them complain about having to drive 35 miles each way to my office!

Allowing audiologists an exclusive role in the hearing aid delivery system, without unqualified medical data evidencing that such a role is necessary for public health reason, which it is not, would severely undermine public health and safety and would increase costs to the hearing impaired.

Please write the Secretary of Health and URGE that this FDA proposed hearing aid rule be withdrawn!

I would appreciate hearing your thoughts on this subject and our Society would appreciate your sending me a copy of any letters you send on my behalf.

Sincerely,

Ruth Electra Terry BC-HIS

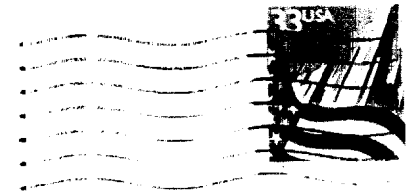
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HAROLD L. GRIFFIN, M.D., P.A.
EAR, NOSE, THROAT & ALLERGY
1221 BOWIE STREET
COLUMBUS, TX 78934



Honorable Donni Shalala
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

